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49845 7590 02/29/2012
SCHWEGMAN, LUNDBERG & WOESSNER/EBAY
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

EXAMINER

PATS, JUSTIN

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3623

DATE MAILED: 02/29/2012

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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09/503,960

02/14/2000

Robert J. Ratterman

2043.002US1

7340

TITLE OF INVENTION: DETERMINING A COMMUNITY RATING FOR A USER USING FEEDBACK RATINGS OF RELATED USERS IN AN ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT

APPLN. TYPE	SMALL ENTITY	ISSUE FEE DUE	PUBLICATION FEE DUE	PREV. PAID ISSUE FEE	TOTAL FEE(S) DUE	DATE DUE
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nonprovisional

NO

\$1740

\$0

\$0

\$1740

05/29/2012

THE APPLICATION IDENTIFIED ABOVE HAS BEEN EXAMINED AND IS ALLOWED FOR ISSUANCE AS A PATENT. PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS CLOSED. THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWANCE IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS. THIS APPLICATION IS SUBJECT TO WITHDRAWAL FROM ISSUE AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE OFFICE OR UPON PETITION BY THE APPLICANT. SEE 37 CFR 1.313 AND MPEP 1308.

THE ISSUE FEE AND PUBLICATION FEE (IF REQUIRED) MUST BE PAID WITHIN THREE MONTHS FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS NOTICE OR THIS APPLICATION SHALL BE REGARDED AS ABANDONED. THIS STATUTORY PERIOD CANNOT BE EXTENDED. SEE 35 U.S.C. 151. THE ISSUE FEE DUE INDICATED ABOVE DOES NOT REFLECT A CREDIT FOR ANY PREVIOUSLY PAID ISSUE FEE IN THIS APPLICATION. IF AN ISSUE FEE HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN PAID IN THIS APPLICATION (AS SHOWN ABOVE), THE RETURN OF PART B OF THIS FORM WILL BE CONSIDERED A REQUEST TO REAPPLY THE PREVIOUSLY PAID ISSUE FEE TOWARD THE ISSUE FEE NOW DUE.

HOW TO REPLY TO THIS NOTICE:

I. Review the SMALL ENTITY status shown above.

If the SMALL ENTITY is shown as YES, verify your current SMALL ENTITY status:

A. If the status is the same, pay the TOTAL FEE(S) DUE shown above.

B. If the status above is to be removed, check box 5b on Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal and pay the PUBLICATION FEE (if required) and twice the amount of the ISSUE FEE shown above, or

If the SMALL ENTITY is shown as NO:

A. Pay TOTAL FEE(S) DUE shown above, or

B. If applicant claimed SMALL ENTITY status before, or is now claiming SMALL ENTITY status, check box 5a on Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal and pay the PUBLICATION FEE (if required) and 1/2 the ISSUE FEE shown above.

II. PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL, or its equivalent, must be completed and returned to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) with your ISSUE FEE and PUBLICATION FEE (if required). If you are charging the fee(s) to your deposit account, section "4b" of Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal should be completed and an extra copy of the form should be submitted. If an equivalent of Part B is filed, a request to reapply a previously paid issue fee must be clearly made, and delays in processing may occur due to the difficulty in recognizing the paper as an equivalent of Part B.

III. All communications regarding this application must give the application number. Please direct all communications prior to issuance to Mail Stop ISSUE FEE unless advised to the contrary.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Utility patents issuing on applications filed on or after Dec. 12, 1980 may require payment of maintenance fees. It is patentee's responsibility to ensure timely payment of maintenance fees when due.

PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL

**Complete and send this form, together with applicable fee(s), to: Mail Mail Stop ISSUE FEE
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P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
or Fax (571)-273-2885**

INSTRUCTIONS: This form should be used for transmitting the ISSUE FEE and PUBLICATION FEE (if required). Blocks 1 through 5 should be completed where appropriate. All further correspondence including the Patent, advance orders and notification of maintenance fees will be mailed to the current correspondence address as indicated unless corrected below or directed otherwise in Block 1, by (a) specifying a new correspondence address; and/or (b) indicating a separate "FEE ADDRESS" for maintenance fee notifications.

CURRENT CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS (Note: Use Block 1 for any change of address)

Note: A certificate of mailing can only be used for domestic mailings of the Fee(s) Transmittal. This certificate cannot be used for any other accompanying papers. Each additional paper, such as an assignment or formal drawing, must have its own certificate of mailing or transmission.

49845 7590 02/29/2012
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P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402

Certificate of Mailing or Transmission

I hereby certify that this Fee(s) Transmittal is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage for first class mail in an envelope addressed to the Mail Stop ISSUE FEE address above, or being facsimile transmitted to the USPTO (571) 273-2885, on the date indicated below.

(Depositor's name)
(Signature)
(Date)

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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09/503,960 02/14/2000 Robert J. Ratterman 2043.002US1 7340

TITLE OF INVENTION: DETERMINING A COMMUNITY RATING FOR A USER USING FEEDBACK RATINGS OF RELATED USERS IN AN ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT

APPLN. TYPE	SMALL ENTITY	ISSUE FEE DUE	PUBLICATION FEE DUE	PREV. PAID ISSUE FEE	TOTAL FEE(S) DUE	DATE DUE
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nonprovisional NO \$1740 \$0 \$0 \$1740 05/29/2012

EXAMINER	ART UNIT	CLASS-SUBCLASS
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PATS, JUSTIN 3623 705-007290

1. Change of correspondence address or indication of "Fee Address" (37 CFR 1.363).

- ☐ Change of correspondence address (or Change of Correspondence Address form PTO/SB/122) attached.
☐ "Fee Address" indication (or "Fee Address" Indication form PTO/SB/47; Rev 03-02 or more recent) attached. **Use of a Customer Number is required.**

2. For printing on the patent front page, list

- (1) the names of up to 3 registered patent attorneys or agents OR, alternatively, 1 _____
(2) the name of a single firm (having as a member a registered attorney or agent) and the names of up to 2 registered patent attorneys or agents. If no name is listed, no name will be printed. 2 _____
3 _____

3. ASSIGNEE NAME AND RESIDENCE DATA TO BE PRINTED ON THE PATENT (print or type)

PLEASE NOTE: Unless an assignee is identified below, no assignee data will appear on the patent. If an assignee is identified below, the document has been filed for recordation as set forth in 37 CFR 3.11. Completion of this form is NOT a substitute for filing an assignment.

(A) NAME OF ASSIGNEE (B) RESIDENCE: (CITY and STATE OR COUNTRY)

Please check the appropriate assignee category or categories (will not be printed on the patent) : ☐ Individual ☐ Corporation or other private group entity ☐ Government

4a. The following fee(s) are submitted:

- ☐ Issue Fee
☐ Publication Fee (No small entity discount permitted)
☐ Advance Order - # of Copies _____

4b. Payment of Fee(s); (Please first reapply any previously paid issue fee shown above)

- ☐ A check is enclosed.
☐ Payment by credit card. Form PTO-2038 is attached.
☐ The Director is hereby authorized to charge the required fee(s), any deficiency, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number _____ (enclose an extra copy of this form).

5. Change in Entity Status (from status indicated above)

- ☐ a. Applicant claims SMALL ENTITY status. See 37 CFR 1.27. ☐ b. Applicant is no longer claiming SMALL ENTITY status. See 37 CFR 1.27(g)(2).

NOTE: The Issue Fee and Publication Fee (if required) will not be accepted from anyone other than the applicant; a registered attorney or agent; or the assignee or other party in interest as shown by the records of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

Authorized Signature _____ Date _____

Typed or printed name _____ Registration No. _____

This collection of information is required by 37 CFR 1.311. The information is required to obtain or retain a benefit by the public which is to file (and by the USPTO to process) an application. Confidentiality is governed by 35 U.S.C. 122 and 37 CFR 1.14. This collection is estimated to take 12 minutes to complete, including gathering, preparing, and submitting the completed application form to the USPTO. Time will vary depending upon the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you require to complete this form and/or suggestions for reducing this burden, should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND TO: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450.

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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/503,960	02/14/2000	Robert J. Ratterman	2043.002US1	7340
49845 7590 02/29/2012 SCHWEGMAN, LUNDBERG & WOESSNER/EBAY P.O. BOX 2938 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402			EXAMINER PATS, JUSTIN	
			ART UNIT 3623	PAPER NUMBER
DATE MAILED: 02/29/2012				

Determination of Patent Term Extension under 35 U.S.C. 154 (b) (application filed after June 7, 1995 but prior to May 29, 2000)

The Patent Term Extension is 0 day(s). Any patent to issue from the above-identified application will include an indication of the 0 day extension on the front page.

If a Continued Prosecution Application (CPA) was filed in the above-identified application, the filing date that determines Patent Term Extension is the filing date of the most recent CPA.

Applicant will be able to obtain more detailed information by accessing the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) WEB site (<http://pair.uspto.gov>).

Any questions regarding the Patent Term Extension or Adjustment determination should be directed to the Office of Patent Legal Administration at (571)-272-7702. Questions relating to issue and publication fee payments should be directed to the Customer Service Center of the Office of Patent Publication at 1-(888)-786-0101 or (571)-272-4200.

Privacy Act Statement

The Privacy Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-579) requires that you be given certain information in connection with your submission of the attached form related to a patent application or patent. Accordingly, pursuant to the requirements of the Act, please be advised that: (1) the general authority for the collection of this information is 35 U.S.C. 2(b)(2); (2) furnishing of the information solicited is voluntary; and (3) the principal purpose for which the information is used by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is to process and/or examine your submission related to a patent application or patent. If you do not furnish the requested information, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office may not be able to process and/or examine your submission, which may result in termination of proceedings or abandonment of the application or expiration of the patent.

The information provided by you in this form will be subject to the following routine uses:

1. The information on this form will be treated confidentially to the extent allowed under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) and the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a). Records from this system of records may be disclosed to the Department of Justice to determine whether disclosure of these records is required by the Freedom of Information Act.
2. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, in the course of presenting evidence to a court, magistrate, or administrative tribunal, including disclosures to opposing counsel in the course of settlement negotiations.
3. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a Member of Congress submitting a request involving an individual, to whom the record pertains, when the individual has requested assistance from the Member with respect to the subject matter of the record.
4. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a contractor of the Agency having need for the information in order to perform a contract. Recipients of information shall be required to comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552a(m).
5. A record related to an International Application filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization, pursuant to the Patent Cooperation Treaty.
6. A record in this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to another federal agency for purposes of National Security review (35 U.S.C. 181) and for review pursuant to the Atomic Energy Act (42 U.S.C. 218(c)).
7. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the Administrator, General Services, or his/her designee, during an inspection of records conducted by GSA as part of that agency's responsibility to recommend improvements in records management practices and programs, under authority of 44 U.S.C. 2904 and 2906. Such disclosure shall be made in accordance with the GSA regulations governing inspection of records for this purpose, and any other relevant (i.e., GSA or Commerce) directive. Such disclosure shall not be used to make determinations about individuals.
8. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to the public after either publication of the application pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 122(b) or issuance of a patent pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 151. Further, a record may be disclosed, subject to the limitations of 37 CFR 1.14, as a routine use, to the public if the record was filed in an application which became abandoned or in which the proceedings were terminated and which application is referenced by either a published application, an application open to public inspection or an issued patent.
9. A record from this system of records may be disclosed, as a routine use, to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency, if the USPTO becomes aware of a violation or potential violation of law or regulation.

Notice of Allowability	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/503,960	RATTERMAN ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	JUSTIN M. PATS	3623	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to Applicant's response of 1/30/12 and communications with Applicant on 2/21/12.
2. ☐ An election was made by the applicant in response to a restriction requirement set forth during the interview on ____; the restriction requirement and election have been incorporated into this action.
3. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-5,7,9,10,14-16,21-24,26-29,31-35,37-40,48-50 and 52-54.
4. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
 1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* Certified copies not received: ____.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

5. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
 6. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
 - (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
 - 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date ____.
 - (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date ____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).**
7. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statements (PTO/SB/08),
Paper No./Mail Date ____ 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit
of Biological Material | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413),
Paper No./Mail Date ____. 7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Amendment/Comment 8. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Other ____. |
|---|---|

/JUSTIN M PATS/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3623

Art Unit: 3623

DETAILED ACTION

Notice to Applicant

1. The following is an Examiner's Amendment and Reasons for Allowance following Applicant's filing of a response on 1/30/12 and communications with Jun Wei, Reg. No. 55,717 on 2/21/12.
2. Applicant's submission filed on 1/30/12 has been entered, in which Applicant amended claims 1, 14, 22-23, 28, 33, 42, 48, and 55.
3. Of claims 1-10, 14-17, 21-29, 31-59 pending as of 1/30/12, claims 1-5, 7, 9-10, 14-16, 21-24, 26-29, 31-35, 37-40, 48-50, and 52-54 are allowed as amended below.

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Allowable Subject Matter

4. Claims 1–5, 7, 9–10, 14–16, 21–24, 26–29, 31–35, 37–40, 48–50, and 52–54 as amended below are allowed over the prior art as explained further below in the reasons for allowance.

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EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

5. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given via communications with Jun Wei, Reg. No. 55,717 on 2/21/12.

The application has been amended as follows:

In the Claims

Please amend claims 1, 4, 7, 9, 14, 16, 22, 24, 28, 29, 33, 34, 40, 48, 49, and 52, and cancel claims 6, 8, 17, 25, 36, 41–47, 51, 55–59 of the application as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, comprising:

maintaining a relationship tree representing relationships among a plurality of users of an online trading community, the relationship tree including sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users including a particular user and one or more users that were referred by the particular user to said online trading community, wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user are children of said particular user and siblings to each other, and wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user have lineal descendants that include additional users that were referred by the one or more users referred by the particular user;

storing said sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users in a data structure, wherein the data structure for the particular user contains a pointer to at least one of said plurality of users;

associating, by a first processor, one or more characteristic values with ~~each user of said~~ plurality of users including said particular user, said one or more users referred by the particular user, and said lineal descendants, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each of said plurality of users and ~~each user, the individual feedback rating associated with each user~~ being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community;

deriving, by a second processor, a community rating uniquely corresponding to said ~~[[a]]~~ particular user by ~~summing~~ aggregating said ~~an~~ individual feedback rating associated with the particular user, ~~one or more~~ said individual feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, and ~~one or more~~ said individual feedback ratings associated with said lineal descendants ~~one or more users referred by the one or~~

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~~more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, wherein deriving is performed utilizing the pointer in said data structure ; and~~

storing the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user in a storage device.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more characteristic values comprise a feedback value based on feedback concerning the particular user received from said other users of the plurality of users in the electronic community.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~[[6]]~~ 1, wherein ~~the sponsorship relationships of the plurality of users are represented as~~ the relationship tree includes one or more n-ary trees.

Cancel claim 8

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[8]]~~ 1, wherein the ~~data structure for the particular user contains a pointer is to the~~ at least one user of the plurality ~~of users~~ that was referred by the particular user.

14. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having stored thereon data representing sets of instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the machine to:

maintain a relationship tree representing relationships among a plurality of users of an online trading community, the relationship tree including sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users including a particular user and one or more users that were referred by the particular user to said online trading community, wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user are children of said particular user and siblings to each other, and wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user have lineal descendants that include additional users that were referred by the one or more users referred by the particular user;

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store said sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users in a data structure, wherein the data structure for the particular user contains a pointer to at least one of said plurality of users;

associate ~~associating~~ one or more characteristic values with ~~each user of~~ said plurality of users including said particular user, said one or more users referred by the particular user, and said lineal descendants, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each of said plurality of users and ~~each user, the individual feedback rating associated with each user~~ being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community;

derive ~~deriving~~ a community rating uniquely corresponding to said [[a]] particular user by ~~summing~~ aggregating said ~~an~~ individual feedback rating associated with the particular user, ~~one or more~~ said individual feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, and ~~one or more~~ said individual feedback ratings associated with said lineal descendants ~~one or more users referred by the one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, wherein deriving is performed~~ utilizing the pointer in said data structure.

16. (Currently Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the one or more characteristic values comprise a feedback value based on feedback concerning the particular user received from said other users of the plurality of users in the electronic community.

17. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, comprising:

associating, by a first processor, a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an online trading community, the first characteristic value being obtained for the first user utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the first user from other users of the plurality of users;

associating, by a second processor, a second characteristic value with a second user of the plurality of users, wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first

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user, the second characteristic value being obtained for the second user utilizing a second feedback value based on feedback received concerning the second user from said other users of the plurality of users;

associating a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein the third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the third characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback value based on feedback received concerning the third user from said other users of the plurality of users;

maintaining a relationship tree representing relationships among said plurality of users, the relationship tree including sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users including said first user, said second user, and said third user, wherein said second user and one or more users referred by the first user to the online trading community are children of said first user and siblings to each other and wherein said second user has lineal descendants that include one or more users that were referred by the second user to the online community, including the third user;

storing said sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users in a data structure, wherein the data structure for the particular user contains a pointer to at least one of said plurality of users;

deriving, by a third processor, a first community rating for the first user by aggregating ~~utilizing a sum of~~ the first feedback value, the second feedback value, and the third feedback value, wherein deriving is performed utilizing the pointer in said data structure; and

storing the first community rating for the first user in a storage device.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 22, ~~further comprising maintaining a relationship tree between the first user and the second user of the plurality of users, wherein the relationship tree comprises a sponsorship relationship having~~ wherein as a child of the first user, the second user as is a lineal descendent of the first user.

25. (Cancelled)

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28. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium having stored thereon data representing sets of instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the machine to:

associate a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an online trading community, the first characteristic value being obtained for the first user utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the first user from other users of the plurality of users;

associate a second characteristic value with a second user of the plurality of users, wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first user, the second characteristic value being obtained for the second user utilizing a second feedback value based on feedback received concerning the second user from said other users of the plurality of users;

~~associate~~ associating a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein the third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the third characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback value based on feedback received concerning the third user from said other users of the plurality of users;

maintain a relationship tree representing relationships among said plurality of users, the relationship tree including sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users including said first user, said second user, and said third user, wherein said second user and one or more users referred by the first user to the online trading community are children of said first user and siblings to each other and wherein said second user has lineal descendants that include one or more users that were referred by the second user to the online community, including the third user;

store said sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users in a data structure, wherein the data structure for the particular user contains a pointer to at least one of said plurality of users;

derive a first community rating for the first user by aggregating ~~utilizing a sum of~~ the first feedback value, the second feedback value, and the third feedback value, wherein deriving is performed utilizing the pointer in said data structure.

29. (Currently Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 28, ~~wherein the sets of instructions which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to maintain a~~

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~~relationship tree between the first user and the second user of the plurality of users, wherein the relationship tree comprises a referral relationship having the second user, who is a child of the first user, as a lineal descendent of the first user and the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first user.~~

33. (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

a first storage medium; and

a first computer coupled with the first storage medium, the first computer to:

maintain a relationship tree representing relationships among a plurality of users of an online trading community, the relationship tree including sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users including a particular user and one or more users that were referred by the particular user to said online trading community, wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user are children of said particular user and siblings to each other, and wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user have lineal descendants that include additional users that were referred by the one or more users referred by the particular user;

store said sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users in a data structure, wherein the data structure for the particular user contains a pointer to at least one of said plurality of users;

associate one or more characteristic values with said plurality of users including said particular user, said one or more users referred by the particular user, and said lineal descendants, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each of said plurality of users and being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community;

derive a community rating uniquely corresponding to said particular user by aggregating said an individual feedback rating associated with the particular user, said individual feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, and one or more said individual feedback ratings associated with said lineal descendants, wherein deriving is performed utilizing the pointer in said data structure.

~~associate one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual~~

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~~feedback rating associated with each user and established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community, and to derive a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by summing an individual feedback rating associated with the particular user, one or more individual feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, and one or more individual feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community.~~

34. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 34, further comprising:

a second storage medium; and

a second computer coupled with the second storage medium and the first computer via a network interface, the second computer to receive feedback concerning the particular user from said other users of the plurality of users, generate a feedback value corresponding to the particular user based on the feedback, and transmit the feedback value to the first computer.

36. (Cancelled)

40. (Currently Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 28, wherein the sets of instructions which, when executed by the machine, further cause the machine to:

~~associate a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein the third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the third characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback value based on feedback received concerning the third user from other users of the plurality of users; and~~

derive a second community rating for the second user by utilizing an aggregation of the second characteristic value and the third characteristic value.

41-47. (Cancelled)

48. (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:

a first storage medium; and

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a first computer coupled with the first storage medium, the first computer to:

associate a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an online trading community, the first characteristic value being obtained for the first user utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the first user from other users of the plurality of users;

associate a second characteristic value with a second user of the plurality of users, wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first user, the second characteristic value being obtained for the second user utilizing a second feedback value based on feedback received concerning the second user from said other users of the plurality of users;

associate a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein the third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the third characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback value based on feedback received concerning the third user from said other users of the plurality of users;

maintain a relationship tree representing relationships among said plurality of users, the relationship tree including sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users including said first user, said second user, and said third user, wherein said second user and one or more users referred by the first user to the online trading community are children of said first user and siblings to each other and wherein said second user has lineal descendants that include one or more users that were referred by the second user to the online community, including the third user;

store said sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users in a data structure, wherein the data structure for the particular user contains a pointer to at least one of said plurality of users;

derive a first community rating for the first user by aggregating the first feedback value, the second feedback value, and the third feedback value, wherein deriving is performed utilizing the pointer in said data structure.

~~associating one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each user, the individual feedback rating associated with each~~

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~~user being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community; and~~

~~determining a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by summing one or more of the following: (1) an individual feedback rating associated with the particular user, (2) an individual feedback rating associated with each user of the plurality of users referred to the online trading community by the particular user, (3) an individual feedback rating associated with each user referred to the online trading community by each referred user of the particular user, and (4) a number of users referred to the online community by the particular user.~~

49. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 48, further comprising:

a second storage medium; and

a second computer coupled with the second storage medium and the first computer via a network interface, the second computer to receive feedback concerning the first ~~particular~~ user from said other users of the plurality of users, generate a feedback value corresponding to the first ~~particular~~ user based on the feedback, and transmit the feedback value to the first computer.

51. (Cancelled)

52. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 48, wherein the first computer is further to perform a recursive routine when determining the community rating for the first ~~particular~~ user.

55-59. (Cancelled)

Reasons for Allowance

6. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Applicant's invention are computer-implemented methods, systems, and machine readable mediums for maintaining a relationship tree representing relationships among a plurality of users of an online trading community, including sponsorship relationships between the users including a particular user and one or more users that were referred by the particular user to the online trading community, wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user are children of said particular user and siblings to each other, and wherein said one or more users referred by the particular user have lineal descendants that include additional users that were referred by the one or more users referred by the particular user; storing said sponsorship relationships between the users in a data structure containing a pointer to at least one of the users; associating one or more characteristic values with the users representing an individual feedback rating based on votes from other users of the users of the online trading community; deriving a community rating uniquely corresponding to said particular user by aggregating said individual feedback rating associated with the particular user, with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, and with said lineal descendants, wherein deriving is performed utilizing the pointer in said data structure ; and storing the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user in a storage device.

The closest prior art is **Ginn (US 6,052,723)**, which teaches associating, by a first processor, one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each user, the individual feedback rating associated with each user being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community; determining, by a second processor, a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by summing an individual feedback rating values associated with the particular user; storing the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user in a storage device; and associating the community rating to the particular user.

Zacharia et al. (*Collaborative Reputation Mechanisms in Electronic Marketplaces*) teaches a system that tracks the reputation of users in an online community and utilizes a point system to track such reputations, including the concept that a reputation or trust based online community would specifically trade merchandise over a network, wherein the trading of merchandise comprises at least one of buying or selling of goods or services.

Epinions.com teaches associating one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each user, the individual feedback rating associated with each user being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community; deriving a community rating uniquely

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corresponding to a particular user by aggregating an individual feedback rating associated with the particular user and one or more feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community; maintaining the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived and maintained. See also pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19); and maintaining a relationship tree between each user of the plurality of users, the relationship tree includes sponsorships between the particular user and any users of the plurality of users that were referred by the particular user.

However, neither Ginn, Zacharia, nor Epinions, singularly or in combination, teach or fairly suggest, the combination of

maintain (or maintaining) a relationship tree representing relationships among said plurality of users, the relationship tree including sponsorship relationships between said plurality of users including said first user, said second user, and said third user, wherein said second user and one or more users referred by the first user to the online trading community are children of said first user and siblings to each other and wherein said second user has lineal descendants that include one or more users that were referred by the second user to the online community, including the third user;

and

derive (or deriving) . . . a community rating uniquely corresponding to said particular user by aggregating said individual feedback rating associated with the particular user, said individual feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community, and said individual feedback ratings associated with said lineal descendants, wherein deriving is performed utilizing the pointer in said data structure

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Nor does the remaining prior art of record remedy the deficiencies found in Ginn, Zacharia, and Epinions. Furthermore, neither the prior art, the nature of the problem, nor knowledge of a person having ordinary skill in the art provides for any predictable or reasonable rationale to combine prior art teachings.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to JUSTIN M. PATS whose telephone number is (571)270-1363. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday, 8:00am - 5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Beth Boswell can be reached on 571-272-6737. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/JUSTIN M PATS/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3623